

### *Capital Punishment*

improvement of this particular area of the administration of criminal justice in Canada.

This must be done if we are to build respect into the criminal justice system. We need fewer bleeding hearts and more realists. I believe most retentionists and indeed most abolitionists would agree with this move. Unfortunately, the Government has not seen fit to initiate such an all-encompassing and effective review of the system, although I believe we have a parliamentary committee which is beginning to aim at that process. The Prime Minister should have made that point in his speech last week.

I want to appeal to the Government to either make a commitment or amend the present resolution accordingly before it goes to a vote. The Government still has time to make this a useful exercise, to prove to the people of Canada that the Government is prepared to repair the system.

As I have said, this is a very moving and serious speech for me in that it explains my reasons for not voting for this resolution to reinstate the death penalty in Canada because this entire debate does not attack the problem. If the death penalty is reinstated and not acted upon, this whole debate will only be looked upon as a charade. Nothing will happen. The Prime Minister will say that he brought the issue before the House and it will look as though he kept one promise. However, the fact is that it is not a serious one because, as we have seen, it is a wide open vote and the Government itself has not taken a stand on the system of justice.

The fact that this resolution puts the onus and responsibility on Parliament and the 15-member parliamentary committee which will be formed, instead of on the Government, shows how vacillating this Government really is. At the same time the Prime Minister is trying to slough off the pro-reinstatement Members on his own benches. He is, in fact, taking them for another political ride.

Some of the most hardened criminals have admitted that they would consider 25 years in prison to be tougher punishment than the death penalty. Perhaps then, for some, the death penalty is too kind. We know that child murderers and murderers of women have to be segregated in prisons because some of the other prisoners have no respect for them and their lives are in danger. These prisoners should never be let off lightly and do not deserve privileges of any kind.

A Conservative back-bench Member of Parliament asked the Solicitor General of Canada (Mr. Kelleher) a question the other day about the parole system. The Solicitor General said that he was looking into it and attempting to implement measures. We want to know precisely what the Solicitor General has done and what commitment he will make in Parliament by way of improving the procedures of handling first degree murderers.

• (1320)

It is important to note how attitudes and outlooks change over the years. At the time of Confederation, the death penalty was imposed in cases of murder, treason and rape. Several Bills to abolish capital punishment were introduced up to 1950, but none were successful.

In 1953, following the introduction and withdrawal of a similar Bill for abolition, a Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons was established to study three topics, which should be noted by the House. They were capital punishment, corporal punishment, and lotteries. Thirty-four years ago, lotteries in Canada were put in the same category as capital punishment and corporal punishment.

Imagine that today, lotteries are big business in Canada, corporal punishment has disappeared, and we are still debating capital punishment.

In 1953, the joint committee of both Houses of Parliament in Canada considered the feasibility of abolishing capital punishment. Its final report in 1956 recommended the retention of the death penalty for murder, except in the case of children under 18. It further recommended that capital punishment be reviewed periodically by Parliament, and the method of execution be changed. Various Bills continued to be discussed in Parliament right up until the present time.

According to the polls, Canadian public opinion also changed over the years from a clear majority in support of the death penalty in 1943 and 1953, to a bare majority of 51 per cent in favour in 1960. By 1975, approximately seven out of every ten Canadians favoured the death penalty. That has not changed a great deal over the years.

I am convinced that if administration procedures surrounding first degree murderers are tightened, Canadians would support that because they could visibly see sound improvements being made.

Much has been stated in this debate about those great, brave words of Edmund Burke uttered to his electors in Bristol when he said:

Your representative owes you not his industry only but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

While these sound like great, brave words, one must also check the facts. Edmund Burke did not run for re-election after he said those words, but chose to stand down.

I find it rather cynical that Edmund Burke is used as an example in this debate because I believe that only those Members of Parliament who are willing to stand up and be counted in this debate and put their sincere views on the record, then go back to face the electorate, are the ones who have the back bone to make such decisions on the criminal justice system in Canada.

I am absolutely firm in my intention to attack the system as it now exists. I want improvements to the system. I want it tightened up in order to bring back some respect for the